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President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and National Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Douglas (Saint Kitts and Nevis): My Government supports the report of the Secretary-General, which reaffirms development, peace, security and human rights as fundamental to the well-being of any modern State. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis steadfastly contends that there is an inherent link between poverty reduction, the promotion of human rights, economic development, security and good governance.

Regrettably, the tendency has been to separate them, in favour of what some call political imperatives. I daresay policies do not and cannot exist in a vacuum. Politics is about people, and therefore national, regional or even international organizational policies must be about people. There is stark evidence of this.

The political landscape reveals clear indications of the interconnectedness of the phenomena of poverty eradication, security, economic development and governance. The task of governance is becoming increasingly difficult in the face of growing unemployment, deepening poverty, escalating energy prices and a mounting cost of living. As a consequence, we have witnessed social dislocations and civil disquiet. The fruits of globalization still do not grow among the world's poorest, who have become further marginalized and blame their Governments, which, despite their best efforts, are often relegated to the margins of political discourse and economic activities.

Some citizens have become more vocal and more open in their distrust of Government policies that fail to deliver the promises of democracy and globalization, fail to reduce poverty and unemployment and fail to improve their standard of living. The economic and political rift between rich and poor nations is steadily becoming a deeper divide as mistrust continues to characterize relations between the developed and the developing countries.

Understandably, small countries — despite limited and diminishing resources — are expected to participate equally in the fight against the social scourges that confront us. But that dramatically reduces our ability to make new and necessary investments in socio-economic development. It is within that context that we urge Member nations to substantively support the Millennium Development Goals. We also urge them to partner with us, recognizing our vulnerabilities to natural disasters and other external economic factors, and recognizing the need for preferred and differential treatment in trade and access to markets in developed countries. We urge developed countries to implement policies that do not

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undermine our efforts or reverse the gains that we in small developing countries have made. We call for equity and for a willingness to live and let live.

Despite overwhelming odds, however, the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis stands ready to do its share. At the base of our efforts and policies is the fundamental importance of strengthening the rights of the child. We believe that promoting the rights of the child goes to the heart of full and effective protection of human rights. We also firmly believe that by making sure every child in Saint Kitts and Nevis has access to primary and secondary education, to potable water and to health care, we are creating healthier, better adjusted and productive adults whose rights will have been nourished and enshrined in the policy orientation and development agenda of our proud country.

It is generally accepted that the right to development is also a fundamental right that national Governments have a primary responsibility to ensure. Long before the Millennium Development Goals were formally elaborated and adopted by the community of nations, that fundamental right was emphatically understood by the Government and the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis. As a point of reference, in this year's *Human Development Report* issued by the United Nations Development Programme, Saint Kitts and Nevis was ranked 49 out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index — the second-highest ranking in the Caribbean region and, indeed, among the highest in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The report reflects the reality in Saint Kitts and Nevis, where there is an adult literacy rate of 97.8 per cent, a life expectancy rate of 70 years — which needs upward revision — and a combined primary, secondary and tertiary school enrolment ratio of 89 per cent. The report underscores our commitment to gender equality, starting with current parity in enrolment levels among girls and boys in school at both the primary and the secondary levels. The report also confirms 98 per cent access to safe water and sanitation. In the field of health, it notes a 99 per cent rate of immunization of infants against tuberculosis and measles in Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The Pan-Caribbean Partnership to combat HIV/AIDS (PANCAP), established by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), has proved to be a useful and pragmatic vehicle for collective action and results. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, our own fight against HIV/AIDS uses that particular model. PANCAP has distinguished itself and has been identified as a best-practice model. We are therefore now pursuing policies aimed at universal access to treatment and care and at ending discrimination and the stigmatization of those persons affected by HIV/AIDS, while at the same time continuing our public education initiatives on preventing the spread of the virus.

A per capita income of more than $7,000 places us squarely among upper-middle-income countries. We thank the United Nations for recognizing our efforts, which are the result of policies engineered to ensure the development of the individual despite the obstacles that we face as a small economy. They also reflect the commitment of my Government to ensuring the protection of the rights of our children and their role in our country's future.

That, however, is only one side of the coin. The achievements to which I referred come at an enormous cost — a cost that represents an enormous burden — to our people. The past decade has been particularly difficult for Saint Kitts and Nevis. Our small island State continues to be especially vulnerable to natural disasters, external economic fluctuations and policies biased against small economies such as ours. My country has experienced back-to-back hurricanes, landslides and floods, at a cost of more than half a billion dollars. We have been forced to direct more and more of our scarce resources towards recovery and away from development.

The experience throughout the Caribbean region is very similar. It was just in July this year that our sister CARICOM nation of Grenada again suffered serious devastation, caused by Hurricane Emily, on the back of last year's devastation brought by Hurricane Ivan. The Maldives, another small island sister nation, has made pleas for a delay in the process set in motion for its graduation from the list of least developed countries, owing to the tsunami. We specifically support the Maldives' request.

In addition to the cost of recovery, escalating high prices and the cost of food imports, Saint Kitts and Nevis, as an emerging tourist destination, has faced the prohibitively high cost of implementing supplementary security measures since 11 September 2001. To further compound that grave situation, the recent rulings of the World Trade Organization relative to trade preferences have dealt a most significant blow

to small economies in the Caribbean and therefore threaten to unravel their economic base.

In the case of my country, after centuries of sugar production and sales to the European market — which have been a cornerstone of our economic support and our social stability — we have been forced to close that industry, which finally succumbed to continuous losses and escalating debts. Saint Kitts and Nevis can no longer compete profitably in a world market that is characterized by engineered low prices for sugar and by the unfair trading practices of some countries. That has severe implications in terms of unemployment, social dislocation, psychological distress and the dramatic loss of urgently needed foreign-exchange earnings.

We have tried to prepare for such an eventuality through a process of economic diversification, but support from the international community has not been forthcoming. The cost of borrowing, the removal of grant financing from the menus of international financial institutions and the annual recovery costs from catastrophic hurricanes have become more and more onerous. Creative legal policy initiatives, especially in the international financial services sector, have been challenged and undermined by some developed countries.

In an attempt to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, my Government has also pursued policies to stimulate and facilitate private-sector-led growth by investing in physical infrastructure and human resource development. But we need international political and economic support.

The Secretary-General underscored that threats to peace and security represent different things to different countries. If we intend to promote collective security, there must be an appreciation of and sensitivity to this diversity among countries. In the same way, we are called upon to aid in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and other scourges that threaten international peace and security in the more advanced countries. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to expect reciprocity of support in fighting the almost intractable problems that confront small States. To address these urgent challenges, we call on the international community to support and contribute to the full, timely and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which we consider a very important mechanism for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

My Government was heartened by the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a Human Rights Council. We also support effective change in the United Nations, which also means that the Security Council must evolve to reflect current world realities. The United Nations must also play a more enhanced role in development, and the concerns of small island developing States must be given greater attention within this Organization. Small States can offer best-practice models and creative ideas from which the international debate on development, peace, security and human rights could benefit.

We encourage greater transparency in the deliberations of critical organs of the Organization and greater opportunities for small States to be represented in the decision-making processes of these organs.

The people of Taiwan continue to be excluded from the brotherhood of nations, which was created to represent the hopes and aspirations of all peoples. My Government reiterates its call for the people of the Republic of China, Taiwan, to be consulted, effectively represented and invited to participate in the critical debates on world peace, human security, development and human rights. I believe that we would have failed to promote human rights effectively if, through political exclusion, generations of people are relegated to the margins of such important issues and the forums that facilitate their discussion.

I remain cautiously optimistic about the future. On the one hand, Governments have rededicated themselves to the struggle to build a world free from want and fear and with the freedom to live with dignity. In addition, we are poised to reform the United Nations in the hope that it can play a more effective role in this ever-changing world.

However, the tenor of last week's summit suggests a strong possibility that some developed countries may yet renege on those commitments, which could further erode developing countries' efforts to eradicate extreme poverty, generate employment, promote human security and narrow the development gap between richer and poorer countries.

We still have an opportunity for an enhanced global partnership to turn commitments into action and

secure a future for our children, a future that is free from want of the basic necessities, free from fear of violence with guarantees of protection of the right to live in dignity. Only then will we build and reinforce the foundation of democracy, enhance collective security and jumpstart a process where globalization becomes a vehicle for change among all of the world's peoples.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency the Honourable Frederick A. Mitchell, Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Public Service of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): It is my honour to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I also wish to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for the manner in which he guided the work of the fifty-ninth session.

I wish to extend the condolences of the Right Honourable Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Perry Christie, and the Government and people of the Bahamas to the Government and people of the United States in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina last month. This is a scene with which the people of the Bahamas are regrettably all too familiar, and we continue to offer our assistance and support in any way possible.

The High-level Plenary Meeting held last week, at which so many heads of State and Government were represented, served as a timely and much-needed reminder of the need for us all to recommit ourselves to the purposes and principles of this Organization. At a time when some have begun to question the purpose of this Organization, the Bahamas reaffirms that the United Nations remains the best chance for all States, large and small, to achieve peace, security and sustainable development for our peoples.

One of the leaders who spoke last week was the Most Honourable P. J. Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica. On April of 2006, Mr. Patterson demits office after more than a decade in the service of his people and the Caribbean region as Prime Minister, and a generation as a parliamentarian and Government Minister. His statement last week was perhaps his final statement to this Assembly as Prime Minister. The Bahamas — and the region joins us, I am sure — salutes Mr. Patterson as he retires from active public life.

Mr. Patterson's example in Jamaica is one that we know well enough in the Caribbean region. It is the example of democratic governance and the traditions of regular elections and accountability to the publics whom we serve. The history of democracy in our region has also produced for the region an enviable standard of living in many ways. This way of life has been described by the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, as the "Caribbean civilization" — one that did not develop without significant investment in our people and that cannot be sustained unless that investment continues.

The region is neither poor nor rich. It falls in between, having accomplished most if not all of the Millennium Development Goals. But as we watch the development of globalization, there is a tendency to forget that this region of relatively few people and small nations requires the continued support of the developed world. Nowhere is this more evident than in the decisions taken on sugar and bananas. There is a symbiotic relationship between the region and the developed world, with many of our people leaving the region to help to sustain the way of life of the developed world. There is a major transformation right now in economies throughout the region.

Our view is that greater attention from our developed partners must therefore be paid to that region in transition, looking towards investment, particularly in education, support for the delivery of health care and continued support for democratic governance. It is not charity that is required, but a sound, sensible investment in our common future.

Haiti is our poorest member in the region and is perhaps the example from which it is best to draw lessons. We want to thank Brazil and the many sister countries of Latin America that have risen to the challenge with men and materiel. But while much has been given, there are many pledges of donor aid that have not materialized as they should. It is a complaint throughout the developing world that donors make pledges of financial and material support but do not follow through on those pledges.

Haiti today is paying the price in a real way for having charted the way towards freedom in this hemisphere when, in 1804, it struck a blow for the freedom of Africans in the West. Today, we repeat what the American Christian Bishop, T. D. Jakes, said

in the National Cathedral in Washington last week when praying for the victims of Hurricane Katrina: it is what we do that counts, but what we say we will do.

Haiti is of major interest to us in the Bahamas, because, given the circumstances of its economy and its national politics, the Bahamas and the region are facing increased pressure from illegal migration from Haiti and the threat of instability. It is incumbent upon all of us in the United Nations to do all that we can to help resolve the issues in Haiti.

It is also important that we not overlook issues of global governance and institutional reform. It would be nearly impossible for small States, in particular, to sustain meaningful gains from the process of globalization without a voice and without participation in international decision-making and norm-setting bodies. It is for that reason that the Bahamas is encouraged by the discussions that took place during the high-level dialogue on financing for development, held earlier this year, which confirmed that there is a place for the United Nations in all aspects of global standard-setting and assessment. The dialogue clearly demonstrated that there is a need to address the democratic deficit in many of the international economic, financial and trade institutions.

From this rostrum last year, the Bahamas called for the convening of a global forum to address the unfairness of unelected bodies imposing mandates that are unfunded upon developing economies like ours in the region, without our countries having an opportunity to be heard and to influence the result. We call once again for such a forum, and pledge that the Bahamas will continue to work towards levelling the playing field, particularly in the financial services sector.

The images of destruction in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina are all too familiar to many small island developing States. The images have been sobering, as we realize that even the biggest and strongest of us has to grapple with the difficulties associated with the recovery from such a destructive force of nature. Last year in this Hall, we said that the native peoples of our region were so familiar with the violent storms that plague the region in the summer months that they called them hurricanes. Today, we are seeing those storms hit with a savagery unknown in recent times. It leads us to question whether we are now being confronted by cyclical change or by climate change. Either case places front and centre the need for public policy on sustainable development and the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for small island developing States.

The Bahamas, much of whose land is barely five feet above mean sea level, wishes to highlight the need to undertake global action to address the problems of climate change. With the warming of the Earth's surfaces and oceans, we have seen an increase in the incidence of natural disasters, many of them causing untold loss and damage. We have an opportunity, however, to address the adverse effects of climate change. We have a chance to make a statement here during this session that we will not neglect our common but differentiated responsibility to protect our environment and to send this message to Montreal, where, in November this year, the Kyoto Protocol can finally begin to take on a more substantial form.

For countries such as the Bahamas, the threat of devastation as a result of natural disasters is exacerbated by man-made hazards. We once again reiterate our grave concern about the serious threat posed to the security and economic development of Caribbean countries by the trans-shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea, and continue to call on States involved in such trans-shipments to desist from that practice. In this context, I wish to highlight the continuing efforts of the Caribbean region to designate the Caribbean Sea a special area in the context of sustainable development.

The achievement of sustainable development will require healthy, productive populations that are able both to contribute to and benefit from social and economic progress. The unrelenting spread of HIV/AIDS continues to threaten that progress in all countries, but particularly in the hardest hit developing countries. The Bahamas is a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean region, and has been recognized at the international level for the progress made in turning the tide against that disease in our country. We pay tribute to Dr. Perry Gomez, our lead physician in the fight against HIV/AIDS and, indeed, to my predecessor at this rostrum, Mr. Denzil Douglas from Saint Kitts and Nevis, as well as to all the other caregivers throughout the world. We welcome this body's reaffirmation at the highest levels of the fight against that disease.

In this context, the Bahamas looks forward to the high-level five-year review of the progress made in

implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, scheduled to take place in June 2006. At that time we must undertake an honest appraisal of what we have achieved and where we are failing short, and we must determine the way forward towards achieving the full implementation of the Declaration of Commitment.

In addition, the Bahamas has seen useful ideas advanced by the United States of America, the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization, to prevent a bird flu pandemic. We would like to take this opportunity to alert the world that we must fight to stop such an eventuality, and pledge our support in doing so.

By virtue of its geographical location, the Bahamas is an unwitting transit point for illegal drugs from producing countries south of our borders to consumer countries to the north. We have consistently pointed out that the Bahamas does not produce such substances and is not the ultimate destination for them. That, however, does not stop the countries that consume the drugs from blaming countries like ours for the scourge. It is very unfair to do so. It is clear that consuming nations must increase their efforts to reduce demand within their borders. We continue to cooperate with the United States and other countries in that international fight. Our successful efforts and those of the broader region have been acknowledged by our international partners in the fight. I should like to mention in particular the admirable performance of the Bahamas in its counter-narcotics effort and the superb record of our country's police in terms of dismantling drug-trafficking organizations, as well as our hard work to improve the country's ability to combat money-laundering. It is a fight that we pledge to continue.

The Bahamas, like other transit countries, is experiencing the negative social impact of illegal activities associated with that trade. The deadly nexus between illicit drugs and small arms and light weapons and other criminal activities is undermining the economic and social fabric of our nation. We therefore welcome the conclusion in June of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons. The Bahamas, like many other countries, would have strongly preferred to reach agreement on legally binding commitments on the marking and tracing of such weapons. Nonetheless, we hope that this tool will provide some of the necessary political will and momentum to make real progress in halting the illicit accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. We also look forward to adopting concrete commitments in the near future to regulate the activities of brokers of small arms and light weapons. In addition, the Bahamas continues to call on developed countries to take the same extraordinary measures they use in seeking to stop the trafficking of drugs into their countries to stop illegal arms from reaching our shores from their countries.

The Bahamas is pleased to note the adoption by the General Assembly on 13 April 2005 of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. We hope to be in a position to sign the Convention in the near future. We are resolute in the fight against the attacks on innocent people going about their daily lives by those pursuing dubious and nefarious political ends. The vicious attacks in London and Sharm el-Sheikh this year demonstrate clearly the urgency of our task.

However, we must also remember that the fight against those who would attack our common civilization can never be used as an excuse to curtail the rights and freedoms of our citizens, and we must ensure that all counter-measures must conform to both the letter and the spirit of international human rights law. If we lose our common humanity in the process, the other side will win. We must also ensure that a spirit of cooperation and assistance permeates our international cooperation efforts on this issue, as we unite to fight a common enemy.

Over the past year, various issues related to the management of United Nations programmes and funds have been highlighted in the world media. Our Organization has been plagued by allegations of corruption and abuse. Therefore, during the months leading up to the present session, the Bahamas welcomed the opportunity to engage constructively in consultations to ensure a successful outcome on the question of management reform of the Organization. We reaffirm our support for the Secretary-General with respect to the bold measures that he promised in his report entitled "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), and we believe that he should be given the necessary level of authority and flexibility to fulfil his function as our chief executive officer. However, that is not to say that we support those proposals from other quarters that would seek to transfer power from the General

Assembly to the Secretary-General in matters such as the redeployment of resources. The General Assembly is and should remain the principal policy organ of the United Nations, with absolute powers in the area of setting priorities. The Bahamas also looks forward to continuing discussions on the reform of the Security Council, particularly in relation to the Council's working methods.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Mr. Kofi Annan for his fine work in leading the United Nations through treacherous seas over the past years. We will shortly celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations. Looking back over the past 60 years, there is much of which we can justifiably be proud. There are some cases where we must accept that the international community failed to live up to its legal and moral obligation to act for the benefit of people in need. There are some cases where our decisions were dominated by big-Power pragmatism and doubtful legalisms, as opposed to moral certainty and philosophical clarity.

As we move forward, let us be sure that we learn from our mistakes as well as our successes. We have engaged in a process of reflection, which at times has been painful. Let us emerge from this stronger, more unified and determined to act to achieve the goals adopted 60 years ago to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. The peoples of our nations demand and deserve nothing less. Now, more than ever, we need the United Nations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Yeo (Singapore): A few weeks ago, a young Muslim lawyer in Singapore told me about a recent experience he had had in an East Asian airport. Unlike others holding Singaporean passports who were clearing immigration, he was told to stand aside. When he asked the reason, the immigration officer muttered that there were "too many Mohamads" that day. Smiling to himself, the Singaporean waited patiently and peered around, wondering how long he had to wait. The officer then warned him to stand still. He suddenly felt a chill along his spine.

Muslims all over the world are being profiled by security agencies. Since 11 September 2001, Muslims travelling to Western countries have been subject to all manner of interrogations and searches. Although the profiling is now done more subtly now, it continues. And in East Asia, profiling is increasing.

When sudden threats appear, perhaps it is natural to expect a certain overreaction from the affected communities. After Pearl Harbour, all Japanese people living in America became suspect, including those born there. Many were interned. By today's standards, that was an affront. But at that time, it was widely felt to be a necessary precaution. Shocked by that reaction, Japanese-American leaders set out to prove their Americanness, for example by forming the Japanese-American 100th Infantry Battalion, which fought heroically in the European theatre.

The travails of the Japanese-Americans were not unique. Tribalism is a basic human instinct. We may proclaim that all men are brothers, but we reflexively distinguish degrees of closeness. Divisions of race, language, culture and religion run deep in human society and emerge under stress. The ascendancy of the West in the past few centuries created tremendous stress in non-Western communities, upsetting all relationships and giving rise to a variety of responses, all of which sought to reconcile each community's sense of self with the needs of a Western-defined modernity. In Asia, for example, the re-emergence of China and India on the global stage has been a prolonged struggle of reconciling transformation with tradition.

That is the broader historical context against which the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in the world must be viewed today. It is a subject that concerns us all deeply in the United Nations.

There are two evolving developments which feed on each other. The first is change within Islam itself; the other is the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in different parts of the world. Both require our close attention.

The response of the Islamic world to the challenge of modernization will affect the development of the entire world in this century. In some ways, it is comparable to that of the Chinese response to modernization, and it will probably take much longer. The decline of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century took place at about the same time as the decline of the Qing Dynasty in China. Both collapsed at the beginning of the twentieth century. After many

twists and turns, China has finally re-emerged onto the global stage with a bright future ahead of it.

There are about as many Muslims in the world as there are Chinese. In contrast to China, however, the Islamic world is unlikely to re-coalesce in the foreseeable future. Once Ataturk refused the caliphate and with iron determination started reforming Turkish institutions on the Western model, the Islamic world lost its centre. From then on, different Islamic societies experimented with different approaches and moved in different directions. It has been a mixed story.

The different responses of Muslim societies to the challenge of modernization are accompanied by a great ideological debate among political and religious leaders. Good governance has become a major issue, with calls for greater transparency and more democracy. In this debate, it is natural that some groups should look back to a romanticized period when the Islamic world was united and pristine and seek its re-establishment in the twenty-first century. Such were the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, which emanated from Egypt at the beginning of the twentieth century. The ideology of that movement continues to inspire Islamic groups in various parts of the world today. If only Muslims were to abide strictly by the teachings of Islam, there would be no corruption, Governments would be just and effective and Islamic societies would become strong again.

In many Islamic countries at various times, these groups have been suppressed for being subversive, and those who funded them were thought to have ulterior motives. This struggle for the soul of Islam is an ongoing process. However, it is not a struggle unique to Islam. For more than 200 years, Europe was bloodied by religious wars, which ended only with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which created the system of modern European States. But even then, there was still religious persecution, which led many Europeans to flee to the New World. In the twentieth century, the soul of Europe was torn by communism, fascism and anti-Semitism. It was precisely to overcome those divisions that the European Union was established by stages, creating the longest period of peace on that continent.

How Islamic society evolves in the coming decades is mainly for Muslims to decide. Generally speaking, non-Muslims would have no standing to participate in this debate but for two factors which have become critical and which have strategic importance for us all.

The first factor is the emergence of the ideology of Al-Qaida and its sister organizations, such as Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyah. This ideology is a malignant mutation of the ideas associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups that argued for a return of Islamic society to an idealized past. It takes those ideas to an extreme and preaches hatred against non-Muslims worldwide, justifying violence against innocent bystanders even if they are Muslim. The suicide bomber has become a potent weapon in its armoury. The followers of this ideology will not hesitate to use weapons of mass destruction if they can get their hands on them. We have a duty in the United Nations to join in the global war against them.

The second factor necessitating the involvement of non-Muslims in the Islamic debate is the growing Muslim diaspora in many non-Islamic countries. As minority communities, Muslims living in countries like France and Germany, for example, have to accept certain limitations in the practice of their religion. With growing religiosity in recent years, issues like the wearing of the headscarf have surfaced. What constitutes a reasonable compromise varies from country to country. For example, Singapore allows aspects of sharia law to apply to Muslims, including Muslim men being allowed four wives, although only under stringent conditions. It would be hard for non-Muslims to accept this in Europe.

The fact is that while some human values are universal — and we should find more of them — many are not. We have to accept this diversity in the world. A greater tolerance of diversity in the world would create better conditions for peaceful cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslims and would influence the debate within Islam itself.

If non-Muslims tar all Muslims with the brush of terrorism and non-Muslim majority communities treat minority Muslim communities as problem communities, the future will be troubled for all of us. In such a climate, Muslim extremists will gain ascendancy, and the terrorists will find fertile ground for recruitment everywhere.

It is ridiculous to argue that terrorism is inherent in Islam. To do so is to play into the hands of the terrorists. That such views are increasingly being expressed in reputable journals and newspapers is

troubling. Of course one could find blood-curdling passages in the Koran and the Hadith, but these passages must be read in context. We find similar passages too in the Old Testament. As we would not, therefore, argue that terrorism is inherent in Judaism and Christianity, so we should not make Islam the problem. That would be a big mistake. There were periods in history when Islamic society was considerably more advanced than Western society.

Equally, it would be a big mistake for Muslim leaders to allow Muslim extremists to make claims on behalf of Muslims worldwide without contest. This causes non-Muslims to suspect that Muslims are generally in sympathy with them. To be sure, there are genuine grievances that have to be addressed, like Palestine, Chechnya and the future of Iraq, but these are issues that are more political than religious. The strategy of the extremists is to polarize Muslims and non-Muslims worldwide, thereby widening their base of support. Muslim leaders have to counter this strategy. It is also essential for them to reach out to non-Muslim audiences as well. The recent bombings in London led to a strong anti-Muslim backlash at the grass roots that threatened the fabric of British society. This in turn put pressure on Muslim leaders in the United Kingdom to condemn the terrorists in clear terms.

In the end, the fight against the terrorists has to be won within Muslim communities themselves. It is a battle for hearts and minds that requires Muslims to work together with non-Muslims against a common enemy.

We have to make a concerted effort to understand each other better. With globalization, all societies have become multiracial and multireligious to a greater or lesser extent. The pluralism we hold as an ideal in the United Nations is not a choice; it is a vital necessity.

In 1998, at its fifty-third session, the General Assembly declared in resolution 53/22 that 2001 would be the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. In 2001, at the fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly adopted the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (resolution 56/6). And this year the United Nations sponsored numerous meetings on interfaith dialogue. A few months ago, the first Asia-Middle East Dialogue was held in Singapore to promote greater understanding between two important regions of the world.

We need to translate our declarations of principle into everyday language and into practice. Are there limits to what politicians can say to win votes? Should religious leaders be allowed to preach hatred, even in close confines? What do we teach our children in school? What does all this mean to the immigration officer at the airport who does not know that Mohammed is the most common name in the world?

Singapore, a cosmopolitan city-State with a multiracial and multireligious population, is particularly vulnerable. We have experienced ugly racial and religious riots before and have learned that racial and religious harmony should never be taken for granted. It has been necessary for the Government to involve itself in many aspects of ordinary life, including discouraging Christian missionaries from targeting Muslims for conversion, stopping mosques from sharply turning up the volume of their loudspeakers when calling the faithful to prayer, limiting the size of joss sticks which Buddhists and Taoists burn for their rituals and arresting those who incite racial and religious hatred. What may appear to be a small thing to one community can be a serious provocation to another.

This has become the world we live in. We cannot ignore the diversity around us in our everyday life or the tribalism which is in our nature. We will continue to disagree on many things such as the nature of democracy, gender relationships, the death penalty, stem-cell research and what we can or cannot eat. The moment we dismiss those differences as unimportant, or lightly condemn those who disagree with us, the trouble begins.

Therefore, as we strive to achieve the Millennium Goals in the United Nations — and they are worthy Goals — a key task for us is to accept, even celebrate, the differences that divide us in our daily lives. To paraphrase Pope John Paul II, it is only because we are many that we are one, and the United Nations expresses that ideal.

The President: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore for his message on the need for tolerance, mutual understanding and respect.

I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Karel de Gucht, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. De Gucht (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate you most warmly, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly. Through you, I would like also to thank your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for the manner in which he conducted the preparatory work for the summit of Heads of State and Government which has just taken place. We are very grateful to him for having successfully met that challenge.

Even though we had hoped for a more ambitious agreement, the summit allowed us to create a much-needed new impetus and new strategic guidelines for our Organization. Only a stronger and more legitimate United Nations will be able to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century and implement the collective security consensus that we endorsed in the summit's outcome document.

Belgium is a strong advocate of efficient multilateralism. I emphasize the word "efficient" because this is not just a declaration of faith. We need credible structures and strong institutions capable of effectively implementing our international commitments and addressing our common concerns. It is all too easy to indulge in rhetoric; we have to translate our words into action. That is why, in that context, I am pleased with the progress made during the summit.

I am particularly pleased with the consensus reached whereby security, peace, development and human rights are not only interlinked but mutually reinforcing. That is a significant step forward in our efforts to build a more peaceful, more prosperous and more equitable world. That idea will guide our actions and form the basis of our approach. Without peace, there can be no development, and human rights can often be sorely tested. In the absence of development and respect for human rights, stability and security become elusive.

The link between development, stability and human rights becomes most acutely apparent in fragile or failing States. These are often States devastated by conflict or by civil war — States whose leaders are no longer capable of meeting the basic needs of their people. Often, their economic situation has deteriorated dramatically, and sometimes their society itself is in disarray. A large number of the people of such States may be displaced. They may have fled, may be subject to abuse or exploitation and therefore cannot enjoy any of the guarantees that a State should be able to provide to its citizens.

Some States are at risk of becoming zones of lawlessness, in which terrorist and criminal activities can thrive. The uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources can fuel all sorts of criminal networks or conflicts — often with an ethnic dimension — in which large numbers of weapons can circulate uncontrolled.

Such States must return to peace, stability and the rule of law. They must take control of their own future and gradually begin to consider their prospects for development. This is not an easy task. The challenge is tremendous. Almost simultaneously, it is necessary to rebuild State institutions; disarm combatants, give them new prospects and reintegrate them into communities that are often impoverished; reorganize the army and security forces; and give the State the means to restore its authority, organize elections and create conditions conducive to development.

We must help them break that vicious circle and regain their place in the community of nations. In that respect, the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission is crucial. The creation of such a Commission not only illustrates our common resolve to help such States on their path to recovery; it allows us, first and foremost, better to coordinate and focus our efforts. Political, humanitarian, military and financial resources must be mobilized and used effectively to achieve our common goals.

That is particularly true in the case of sub-Saharan African countries that are ravaged by deadly and prolonged conflicts, with the primary victims being the civilian population.

The establishment of such a Commission would generate great hope. It is our common responsibility to make it a success. Belgium wants to contribute actively, including by sharing the experience it acquired in the transition processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi.

Belgium also attaches great importance to promoting the protection of human rights. My country welcomes the strengthening of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the decision to establish a Human Rights Council. But we regret that the summit was not able to finalize the Council's modalities.

Belgium has fully supported the reform and will continue to focus on it. Democracy and respect for human rights are some of our common values and underpin our efforts to promote peace and stability. From now on, those values will be part of our collective security consensus and must be incorporated into our global approach throughout the entire United Nations system. They are our common responsibility.

Among the summit's other achievements, I should like also to highlight the "responsibility to protect". This represents a step forward in the quest for solutions to the most glaring injustices. In the aftermath of the genocides that marked our last century, we solemnly pledged that such atrocities would never happen again.

Let me now turn to good governance, which is essential if our efforts to create a more stable and prosperous world are to be successful. The summit outcome document repeatedly underlines its importance, and rightly so.

Good governance is not a moralistic concept imposed from the outside. It is not about giving good or bad grades, and even less about good and bad students. It is not for others to say what are good policies and what are bad policies. No — good governance is synonymous with effective governance and goes hand in hand with sovereignty. It is about governance that can produce results, make a difference for citizens and create fertile ground for development. Without it, the support of the international community cannot produce the desired results. Without it, the aid of the international community will not find the fertile ground essential to create the conditions for greater prosperity and stability.

We have pledged to attain the objective of allocating 0.7 per cent of our gross national product to official development assistance. We will keep our promise. But we are aware that development is not only a question of money; first and foremost, it is a question of the effective use of resources. The necessary conditions must be established. What matters is the outcome on the ground. Poverty is not inevitable; all peoples have a future that belongs to them. They must take charge of it.

We accordingly have stated, in paragraph 11 of the summit outcome document (resolution 60/1), "good governance and the rule of law ... are essential for sustained economic growth, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger". In the same outcome document, we also clearly reaffirmed our commitment to good governance and the rule of law, and reaffirmed that each country must take responsibility for its own development. Those are the terms of our global partnership for development, as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

All components of the international community have demonstrated generosity. That is particularly true of the European Union. But the international community can hardly be held responsible for the failure of States to protect or assist all or part of their populations. It is difficult to understand why today we must launch donor appeals to deal with the large-scale destruction of houses by a Government that deliberately leaves some 500,000 of its citizens homeless.

That reasoning with regard to the subject of good governance also applies to the similar concepts of democracy and the rule of law. Those are extremely important objectives, both for the development of our societies and for the security of States. But, neither democracy nor the rule of law can be artificially imposed from outside. This is not about dictating exogenous models; we must take a bottom-up approach in creating suitable conditions for the emergence of mechanisms that ensure people's equitable participation in their own governance, in a spirit of inclusivity. In that regard, our first priorities should be the modernization of societies and States and the emancipation of women and children and their inclusion in the global dynamic. Past experience shows that the shortest path to democracy and the rule of law is the modernization of society. The role — indeed, the responsibility — of the international community is to galvanize that modernization process.

We have a great responsibility. Before the end of the year, the Peacebuilding Commission must be established. We also have the task of making the Human Rights Council operational. I sincerely hope that the spirit that prevailed during the summit will also guide the work of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. We must continue to show determination, perseverance and vision in carrying out our work. Only through constant commitment will we make the United Nations the primary instrument for international relations.

That is the important task ahead of us. Our own credibility is at stake. We must once again make the United Nations the instrument par excellence of our strategy to build a more stable and more prosperous world for all. Our peoples demand that. Belgium is willing to rise to that challenge and to shoulder its responsibilities.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Francophonie of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Adada (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the present session. That election is a sign of confidence in your qualities as a statesman and a recognition of your country, Sweden, which reminds us of its illustrious son Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the Organization, who sacrificed his life for the cause of humanity. I should also like to express to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic, our heartfelt congratulations on the skill and wisdom with which he guided the work of the fifty-ninth session and successfully led the difficult negotiations that produced the document recently adopted at the World Summit (resolution 60/1). Finally, we commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his courageous and tireless initiatives to renew and revitalize the United Nations system.

The sixtieth session of the General Assembly is taking place in an international situation characterized not only by recurrent wars but also by the resurgence of terrorist acts that spare no region in the world and by natural disasters that have plunged many families into mourning. We wish to express to the Government and the people of the United States of America our sincerest condolences following Hurricane Katrina.

Combating terrorism, like preserving our environment, calls for greater solidarity. The United Nations, whose sixtieth anniversary we are celebrating, remains the essential tool for expressing that solidarity. It is only the United Nations that will enable us to face the formidable challenges of the future.

The Congo therefore welcomes the adoption of the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting, which sets out the main course of action to be taken. The outcome document gives us reasons for hope about ways in which to meet the challenges facing our world. At the same time, it gives rise to some questions.

The Congo welcomes the clear reaffirmation by all heads of State or Government of their commitment to continue to discuss and seek solutions to the world's main concerns: issues of development, collective peace and security, human rights and the rule of law, and strengthening the United Nations.

We welcome the consensus regarding the need to create a Peacebuilding Commission and a Human Rights Council. A Human Rights Council would, together with the International Criminal Court, enhance the effectiveness of mechanisms to promote and defend human rights.

Institutional reform of the United Nations — encompassing, of course, all its principal organs, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat — like reform of the internal management of our Organization, is both a political and a moral imperative that would enable the United Nations to move with the times and to prepare more effectively to face the coming decades.

The Congo regrets, however, that the serious issue of disarmament was not even mentioned in the outcome document because of a lack of consensus, even though nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are the greatest threats to humanity. The Congo reaffirms its full support for the objective of general and complete disarmament and the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

Africa has always been a source of concern for the United Nations, and the Security Council with good reason spends most of its time on Africa. We have reason to be pleased that some degree of progress has been made in several countries.

In Burundi, we welcome the efforts of the international community, which a month ago led to the successful completion of the electoral process in that country. We welcome the Central African Republic's return to constitutional order after several years of crisis and instability. These countries deserve increased support from the international community so as to consolidate situations that are still fragile.

In the Sudan, we welcome the reconciliation between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the central Government and the new Government of national unity, which has just been established. But the reconciliation between the north and the south in Sudan should not lead us to forget the tragedy that has for two years been affecting another segment of the population in the west of the country, namely, Darfur. We call for greater mobilization on the part of the international community in support of the African Union's efforts to bring an immediate end to that political and humanitarian crisis.

In Côte d'Ivoire, because of the differences between the parties to the conflict and despite the tireless efforts on the part of the United Nations and the African Union, the holding of elections, initially set for October 2005, has now been brought into question. We urge our Ivorian brothers to rise above their differences in the higher interest of their country and of peace and stability in the subregion.

Peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo determine the stability and development of the whole of Central Africa and the Great Lakes region. We applaud the efforts by the international community in support of the electoral process leading to a successful transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Our subregion was very much involved in those efforts. As current chairman of the Economic Community of Central African States, the President of the Republic of the Congo, Mr. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, was assigned by his peers, following the twelfth Conference of Heads of State and Government held in June 2005 at Brazzaville, the task of promoting successful transition. Pursuant to that mandate, together with my colleagues from Angola, Gabon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we met with the international partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, namely Belgium, the European Union and, of course, the United Nations.

Concerning the Great Lakes region, the first summit meeting of the International Conference on the Great Lakes, which was held in November 2004 at Dar es Salaam, aroused great hopes for a return to peace, stability and development in that subregion.

In a few months, the second summit meeting of the International Conference will be held at Nairobi and will adopt a security, stability and development pact, under which our countries intend to implement action programmes and protocols in order to make a reality of their desire for a shared future of peace, security and development.

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is a unique experience of regional peacebuilding. We very much hope that this subregion will be the first to implement the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General concerning peacebuilding.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the appeal made by the President of the Republic of the Congo to the international community in general and to the development partners in particular to make the Great Lakes region a special development area.

Nine of the eleven countries that make up our subregion of Central Africa are now in a post-conflict situation. This subject was discussed at length at the twenty-third meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which was held at Brazzaville from 29 August to 2 September 2005.

We welcome the existence and work of that committee, of which my country is now chair, and at the same time we ask the United Nations to act on the outcome of the committee's multidisciplinary mission to Central Africa in June 2003.

In the Middle East, notwithstanding the persistence of the Israel-Palestine conflict, we welcome and encourage the efforts made over the past several months by the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Ariel Sharon, and the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, which reflect a common desire to bring about a fair and lasting solution.

Consolidation of peace, restoration of macroeconomic balances and combating pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, these are the top priorities of my Government.

Our Government intends to expand its activities to deal with other scourges. We organized in Brazzaville in June 2005 a conference on trypanosomiasis, during which a resolution declaring trypanosomiasis the number-one priority for public health, like HIV/AIDS and malaria, was adopted. We request that special attention be given to this disease.

Concerned about preserving the environment, the Congo and other countries of the subregion entered

into a partnership agreement with the international community in 2002 within the framework of the Congo River Basin Initiative.

The second summit meeting of heads of State and Government on conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa was held at Brazzaville in February 2005, and adopted a long-term strategy for the preservation of the forest, fauna and biodiversity in the greater Congo basin.

I wish to thank the European Union, the United States of America, France and Germany for their support of this initiative.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the African Group for having endorsed the candidacy of the Congo for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for 2006 to 2007. I would like to reassure you that we are fully determined to work resolutely for peace, freedom and justice throughout the world.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Croatia.

Mrs. Grabar-Kitarović (Croatia): Allow me, Sir, to express the pleasure of the Republic of Croatia at your election to the post of President of the General Assembly. At this crucial moment in the history of the United Nations, we are gratified that a friend of multilateralism will be guiding the work of the Assembly. May I also commend the work of your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for his remarkable leadership and tenacity in bringing the fifty-ninth session to a successful conclusion.

I would like to extend the sincere condolences of the people of Croatia to the people of the United States of America on the loss of life and suffering occasioned by Hurricane Katrina. We can take some small comfort from the fact that at such times of need nations instinctively reach out to help others. This provides vivid illustration of the best of humanity and its enormous potential to do good and build a better world.

We believe that the United Nations continues to be indispensable for building a better world. All States benefit from a strong United Nations. Small and medium-sized States, which form the great majority of Members, can articulate their diverse interests at the global level through this universal forum more effectively than in any other. Croatia remembers that the United Nations played a prominent role in its re-emergence as a sovereign State.

Yet the difficulty with which agreement was achieved on the outcome document reflects the present state of the world in which we live. We should not look at this imperfect document through rose-colored eyeglasses. Rather, we should grasp the potential that it holds for moving towards broader and deeper reforms. While we may have broad agreement on the goal — a more efficient and effective United Nations working in the service of mankind — we have created only some of the contours of reform. As the Secretary-General has reminded us, we should not consider that the job has been done. The details remain incomplete.

Let us move now to the details without delay. Let us move forward in helping developing countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Let us operationalize the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. Let us introduce the processes required to strengthen Secretariat management.

Diplomacy is often about compromise. That word has been used frequently in describing the World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1). However, compromise should not be used as a synonym for regression. Development is a pillar of the United Nations mandate, and the MDGs are international obligations.

Over the years, the development dialogue has resulted in a number of key international documents, which bear witness to the progress on poverty-related issues and the ways in which we have agreed to address those vital challenges. Johannesburg and Monterrey are prominent among them.

While it is important to reaffirm the agreed international development framework, it is equally necessary to move forward. Comprehensive debt relief, on which there was progress earlier this year at Gleneagles, and better trade access to the markets of developed countries, which must be an outcome of the Doha round, chart the way forward.

The road to the achievement of the MDGs on which we set out five years ago has been an uneven one. There has been rapid growth in some parts of the globe, resulting in the movement of millions out of poverty. At the same time, sub-Saharan Africa has

stagnated. Small island developing States have special vulnerabilities which threaten their very existence. The achievement of the MDG targets by 2015 requires national and international implementation strategies.

We know that the current level of aid is not enough to achieve the MDGs. It is necessary to look at ways to increase the effectiveness of existing aid, introduce innovative sources of financing and adhere to the agreed timetable for progressively increasing flows. In this regard, Croatia supports the Declaration on Innovative Sources of Financing for Development.

As a country with an economy in transition and as a European Union (EU) candidate, Croatia is undergoing significant internal structural change and external policy scrutiny. We seek to balance those often competing demands by including our MDG obligations within the context of other policy implementation in the transition and EU accession processes. We have developed national development targets based on the MDGs, taking into account our progress to date.

From its coastline, with its over 1,200 islands, to its Karst hinterland and the mountains and plains beyond, Croatia's environment offers rare diversity in a relatively small geographic area. We are vitally interested in the preservation of our national environmental heritage, as well as of the whole of the common environment of mankind. For that reason, we welcome the extensive treatment of environmental issues in the outcome document and reiterate our support for the key concept of sustainable development.

An effective multilateral system must rely upon the interaction of States which are responsible domestic and international actors. In recent years, threats to peace and security have become very common topics of discussion in global affairs. With good reason, much effort has been invested in rallying the required international cooperation for the creation of strategies to confront old and new threats to States. Croatia believes that the United Nations should continue to be in the frontline of that process.

The fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime is among the greatest challenges we face. Last week, the Croatian President signed the Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. That Convention, which took several years to negotiate, is a step forward towards concluding a comprehensive international convention on terrorism. States must make greater efforts to ensure that it comes to fruition during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

Croatia regrets that there has been no meaningful progress on disarmament and non-proliferation. The ongoing stalemate, coming, as it does, in the aftermath of the unsuccessful Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in May, is a disappointment. We support the recent efforts by a number of States in relation to the NPT-based upon the three pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful nuclear cooperation — as well as the universal adoption of the comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols.

Countries which have experienced conflict and subsequently rebuilt their national capacities and institutions understand well the link between security and development. Both security and development are individual pillars of the work of the United Nations. However, we know that together they are vital for sustainable development. Security and development are mutually reinforcing, providing the foundations for the well-being of individuals and of the States in which they live.

Croatia took an active interest in the negotiations on the Peacebuilding Commission. It is clear that such an intergovernmental body is needed to fill a void in the United Nations system. While the expertise of the United Nations in peacekeeping is not in doubt, the challenges of building and entrenching peace are different. We have argued for the inclusion in the membership of the Commission of countries with national experience in peacebuilding. We are pleased that that position was reflected in the outcome document. The inclusion of small States whose own experience has spanned the transition from conflict to relief and, subsequently, development, will add an important dimension which would be absent if the Commission were constituted solely by large, wealthy or powerful States.

The Peacebuilding Commission should assist States to develop and strengthen their key governance institutions and assist local authorities in creating the conditions for sustainable development, including economic growth. It should always ensure that the process is one which is driven by the State concerned and by the key stakeholders within it. If internal

conflicts can be quelled and prevented from recurring, then we are creating the conditions for a safer world.

We believe that the reform of the Security Council is necessary with regard to both its membership and its working methods. We look forward to further progress being made during the current session of the General Assembly on this matter. Clearly, any solution will require the support of as large a group of Member States as possible.

Croatia has been a factor of stability in a neighbourhood where past instability has taken a heavy toll, not only on the countries in the region but also on the broader international community. Our enhanced cooperation with our neighbours is a sure basis for entrenching stability and ensuring preconditions for the expansion of economic opportunities for South-East Europe as a whole. We shall continue to play that regional role.

Having successfully evolved through the peacebuilding spectrum, Croatia is now playing its part as a contributor to more than half of the United Nations peacekeeping operations throughout the world, and training peacekeepers from emerging troop-contributing countries. We are using our national experience to help others in need.

We are now ready to take the next step in our responsibilities as a Member of the United Nations and as a global citizen. For that reason, the Republic of Croatia has presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in the elections to be held in 2007.

The postulates within the United Nations Charter on human rights serve as a universal measure for all nations and peoples. They are at the core of the work of the United Nations. That is why we have supported the efforts to reform and strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery. Croatia supports the decision to strengthen the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to increase the resources allocated to it. Existing machinery in the area of human rights — one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations system — requires such reforms.

Croatia welcomes the decision to establish a Human Rights Council as a new organ with the responsibility for promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights and addressing their violation, wherever they may occur. We are disappointed that the necessary political will was not found to conclude an agreement on the Council in the lead-up to the world summit. However, we will work constructively with other Member States in seeking consensus so that as yet undecided elements relating to that Council can be settled during the sixtieth session.

Croatia is pleased to see the inclusion of an agreement on the "responsibility to protect" in the outcome document. The frustration and suffering that can be caused by inaction on the part of the international community, inert in the face of aggression, has been witnessed all too frequently. We welcome this positive development as a step towards a new normative framework.

Democracy brings freedom for the individual and contributes to the legitimacy of States. As a signatory of the Warsaw Declaration: Towards a Community of Democracies, Croatia fully recognizes the importance of strengthening democracy and advancing its global acceptance as a universal value. Capacity-building can strengthen States by reinforcing the institutions that ensure the rule of law, equity, access and stable government.

Croatia supports the enhancement of the capacity of the United Nations to promote and reinforce democratic institutions and practices around the world. We welcome the decision to establish a Democracy Fund and have, as a concrete measure of our support, made a financial contribution towards its establishment.

Only an efficiently functioning United Nations system can respond to contemporary challenges. This requires effective mandates for the principal organs. Yet, there are distinctly different conceptions among Member States of the principle of State sovereignty. These differences, as we have seen in the recent negotiations, impact directly upon the prospects of adjusting the mandates and interrelationships of the principal organs of the United Nations to the realities of the twenty-first century. We all have more work ahead of us on this account.

Croatia supports the efforts to introduce significant human resource management reforms in the Secretariat. The United Nations cannot afford to have a Secretariat that is not managed in accordance with contemporary standards and practices. For the same reason, we support system-wide coherence, both in management and policy.

There have been many high-minded words uttered on behalf of the United Nations in this Hall during the past week. When we leave this place, let us not forget the principles that we have invoked and the pledges that we have made. Only this can ensure that we accelerate progress towards achievement of both the MDGs and United Nations reform. For its part, you can be assured that the Republic of Croatia shall continue to be a constructive participant in these efforts.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Farouk Kasrawi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. Kasrawi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you warmly on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I would also like to express my confidence that your well-known wisdom and competence will contribute to enriching and focusing the deliberations of this Assembly. Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for the strenuous efforts he exerted during the past session. I would especially like to convey my appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his notable efforts in advancing the reform process in the United Nations.

From this rostrum, allow me to convey my country's solidarity with the people and Government of the United States of America for the tragedy that was inflicted on certain regions and cities by Hurricane Katrina. I would like to extend our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and our sympathy for the destruction caused by the hurricane.

Tackling the reform of the United Nations requires the objective recognition that the Organization, since its establishment in 1945, has achieved a large measure of success in the realization of the purposes and principles of its Charter. Objectivity further requires the admission that substantive and concrete changes have affected the core of the international order and the network of international relations; this has made it imperative to review the role of the United Nations as a matter of a real and urgent international necessity. Such a review should focus on a comprehensive revitalization of this role in order to enable the Organization to respond to such challenges and changes affecting the international system.

The United Nations Charter is a document that is capable of coping with international developments, provided that Member States have the political will to introduce the necessary reforms into the work of the main organs of the Organization. The reforms should ensure that these bodies are able to fulfil the ambitions of member States and, at the same time, provide the environment and mechanism necessary to guarantee the faithful application of the Charter's provisions and the implementation of resolutions adopted, particularly Security Council resolutions, without discrimination.

In this context, we would like to welcome the results of this year's world summit and the adoption of the outcome document, even though more could have been achieved in the document, particularly in relation to the renewal of the international community's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Nevertheless, we hope that the document will be a starting point to development and reform, which we all hope to achieve, so that the United Nations remains the cornerstone of the system of international relations.

While emphasizing the principles of the non-use of force in international relations and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, we believe that the Charter's provisions, if applied, would respond to the new and unconventional challenges that constitute a possible threat to international peace and security. The Security Council can deal with such challenges appropriately and in a timely manner, if the will exists to do so, without exceeding its powers. This requires that serious consideration be given to revitalizing the Council's mechanisms in order to make them more democratic, transparent and representative. That, in turn, requires an expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council in a way that reflects the current international situation and the significant increase in United Nations membership.

In the context of reform, it is imperative to strengthen the General Assembly and enhance its role, which complements that of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. The role of the General Assembly is central, since it is the organ in which all United Nations Member States are represented. It is, therefore, capable of dealing effectively with the requirements of enhanced multilateral international cooperation and the development of the policies necessary for such cooperation.

We support the development of the work of the Economic and Social Council in order to resolve emerging economic, social and development challenges and problems. We would like to emphasize the Council's leading role in coordinating and guiding the international development process and promoting the achievement of the MDGs, which Member States pledged to implement and fulfil by the year 2015.

It is important to consider seriously the current coordination mechanisms with other international organizations involved in development and the liberalization of world economy and trade. It is also imperative to consider the reduction of the debt of developing countries, in accordance with a methodology that helps to achieve sustainable development and bridge the widening gap between developed and developing countries.

Moreover, this development methodology ought to parallel commitments by States towards certain key issues, such as the promotion of good governance, respect for human rights and basic freedoms and the combating of corruption. This is done through a reform process that should take into consideration the particular cultural specificities of each State.

Confronting the existing challenges and settling conflicts requires us to emphasize the necessity to respect the rule of law and human rights.

Combating international terrorism is a priority that requires the close cooperation of all on the basis of the principles mentioned earlier. The same can be said of responses to acts of aggression against others, which should accord with existing commitments under the Charter, international law and Security Council resolutions. To safeguard human rights, it is crucial to revitalize human rights mechanisms, promote their work and establish new machinery, including a Human Rights Council. In the same context, respect for the rule of law requires that we address more serious crimes against the international community — hence the pivotal role of the International Criminal Court in combating war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. Moreover, the promotion of the rule of law makes it imperative to resort to the International Court of Justice to settle disputes between States and to respect its decisions and advisory opinions.

My country is committed to reform and development. We believe that the ideal paradigm for reform is one that comes from within and aims to enhance the protection of human rights and basic freedoms, as well as expanding grass-roots participation in national decision-making. Jordan is in the process of launching a national agenda aimed at formulating a comprehensive reform methodology in the political, economic and social areas over the next 10 years. The agenda also aims to promote grass-roots participation in political decision-making on the basis of a solid democratic choice.

Any real reform and development in a State is affected, positively or negatively, by the political and geographical realities of the region. The pattern of reform in Jordan and the Middle East will be more sustainable and progressive if the political settlement based on the international terms of reference of the peace process, the road map and the Arab peace initiative attains its goal of achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Jordan welcomes the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and certain settlements in the northern West Bank. We stress that this withdrawal is not an alternative to the road map but must be part of it, and that both the Israeli and Palestinian sides must carry out their respective obligations under the road map as well as the recent Sharm el-Sheikh Understandings. In that regard, we call upon Israel to withdraw its military forces from the Palestinian towns reoccupied in September 2000 and to cease all forms of settlement activity in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

We also call upon Israel to cease the construction of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territories and to demolish the segments that have already been built in those territories. We call on it to return the property that was seized and to pay compensation for the damage incurred. The construction of the wall along its current route constitutes a clear and continuous violation of the established norms of international law, including the right to self-determination, human rights principles and the rules of international humanitarian law. That fact was emphasized by the International Court of Justice in its landmark advisory opinion on the subject.

We also urge support for the Palestinian National Authority in its genuine efforts to preserve the truce and to deal firmly with any violations of it or the ceasefire. We call upon the international community and the Quartet in particular to provide all possible

assistance to the Authority. We emphasize here that the most important outcome of the road map is the establishment of an independent, viable Palestinian State that is geographically contiguous, with East Jerusalem as its capital, whose borders are based on those existing before 5 June 1967.

Moreover, we must create conditions conducive to completing the peace process in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, on the basis of full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan Heights, and to reach an agreed solution on the issue of the Palestinian refugees, based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III). That should lead to the establishment of normal relations between the Arab States and Israel, in accordance with the Arab peace initiative and the international terms of reference of the peace process.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan rejects all forms and manifestations of terrorism, regardless of justifications. We stand together on the front lines, in word and deed, to eradicate that scourge, which has afflicted the entire international community and left no one unscathed. My country also rejects all unjust and suspicious attempts to tie that criminal phenomenon to a specific religion, culture or geographical region, and we stand firm against any such attempt to tie it to the Islamic religion. Islam, in substance and practice, is based on moderation and facilitation. It was a pioneer in promoting the protection of human rights and safeguarding the life, dignity and property of persons. It rejects any infringement on these concepts, even in time of war. In that context, the Amman message would emphasize that this divine religion is beyond any suspicion linking its teachings to incitement to harm innocent human beings.

Jordan welcomes the adoption of the Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and supports the efforts under way to ensure the adoption of the comprehensive convention to combat terrorism. We further endorse the proposal made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to establish an international centre to combat terrorism, which was adopted by the Counter-terrorism International Conference, held in Saudi Arabia early this year.

Jordan will continue to assist Iraq in overcoming its current crisis and in consolidating its safety and security. We condemn all aspects and practices of terrorism and extremism in the country, which daily kills scores of innocent people. My country calls on all groups and sectors of the Iraqi population to reach consensus on the basic principles and elements necessary to preserve the unity of Iraq and the inviolability of its territory and to ensure that it continues to belong to the Arab world. We also call for the respect of religious, ethnic and sectarian diversity in the framework of free democratic choice, without prejudice to the rights of its minorities. We reiterate our support for the political process in Iraq and call on the international community to lend its support to create the appropriate conditions for its success. We call also on the United Nations to continue playing its important role.

Let me now turn to an issue that is important to Jordan: the drying out of the Dead Sea, and how to pre-empt an ensuing environmental crisis through the implementation of the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal Project. An agreement was reached recently by the relevant parties and beneficiaries of the project, namely Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, on a feasibility study for the construction of the canal. We look forward to continued international support for this project and the implementation of all its phases, in accordance with the agreement mentioned earlier.

The future of the Middle East requires the creation of strong civil societies enjoying decent lives and deriving their guidance from their strong belief in their heritage. We are endeavouring to achieve this goal at the national level through effective reform projects, whose benefits are beginning to be evident in Jordan.

But stability, security and peace are essential to creating a suitable environment for such societies. Putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and reaching a just and comprehensive solution will contribute to bringing about a bright future.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vuk Drašković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Drašković (Serbia and Montenegro) (*spoke in Serbian; English translation furnished by the delegation*): Seven days ago, from this rostrum, I warned that the situation in Kosovo and Metohija — a province of Serbia administered by the United Nations since 10 June 1999 — poses a serious threat to the

stability of the Balkans. Serbia and Montenegro supports the conclusion of the International Contact Group that there will be no return to the situation before 10 June 1999.

I would like to recall that, before 1999, the regime in Serbia insisted on the limited autonomy of Kosovo, while the Albanian political leaders insisted on its independence. Those two opposing positions led to an armed conflict, and later to NATO air strikes against Serbia and Montenegro. That conflict ended following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), which called for a protectorate in Kosovo but did not call into question the territorial integrity of Serbia and Montenegro.

The Contact Group's conclusion that there will be no return to the situation before June 1999 has to apply equally to both sides — Serbian and Albanian. Consequently, there can be neither limited autonomy nor independence for Kosovo. By proposing a status that was greater than autonomy but less than independence for Kosovo, the democratic Government in Belgrade demonstrated its full commitment to reaching a compromise solution. Unfortunately, the Kosovo Albanians, only interested in independence, have not budged an inch from their 1999 position.

Unfortunately, I have to note that the international community is partly to blame for the tragic position the Serbian and other non-Albanian minorities in Kosovo find themselves in, as well as for the political extremism of the Albanian majority and the many crimes that have been committed. The standards set for Kosovo are not even close to being fulfilled. Are we therefore going to abandon the "Standards before Status" policy? From 10 June 1999 to the present, approximately 200,000 Serbs and Montenegrins, as well as Turks, Croats, Roma, Jews and other non-Albanians, have been expelled from Kosovo. Close to 80 per cent of the territory is now inhabited only by Albanians. Several hundred Serbs have been killed, including many children. Approximately 40,000 Serbian homes have been demolished or set on fire, as well as 150 churches and monasteries that were centuries old. The remaining Serbs and other non-Albanians live in so-called enclaves, without guarantees for their personal safety and their freedom of movement. No one in present-day Europe is so tragically unprotected.

In spite the foregoing, we hope that the United Nations military and police forces will remain in Kosovo. Without their presence, the tragedy of Serbs and other minorities would be complete. Troops from the United States, Italy, France and other countries should be given credit for keeping the Serbian Christian monasteries designated or nominated as international world heritage sites from being blown up or set on fire. We would like to thank the United Nations and ask the United Nations forces to stay in Kosovo as long as necessary.

For months now, Albanian extremists have been openly threatening to launch a pogrom against the remaining Serbs, Montenegrins and other non-Albanians — and even against United Nations forces — unless Kosovo's independence is proclaimed. Recent killings of young Serbs announced the beginning of that scenario. Ultimatums and threats to commit crimes and terrorism cannot be accepted anywhere in the world, including in Kosovo. I hope that that will finally and decisively be made clear to the Albanian majority in the province. Serbia and Montenegro demands a European level of human rights protection for national communities in Kosovo, protection of churches and monasteries and recognition of the European status of the existing State borders with the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Albania. No more and no less is acceptable, either under the Charter of the United Nations or under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Our rights do not threaten any right of the Albanian majority. An independent State of Kosovo is not a guaranteed right, but an extreme demand.

We are truly and fully committed to a compromise, but compromise does not mean that one side gets everything while the other side gets nothing. We are for reconciliation and a common European future, in which Serbs, Montenegrins and Albanians will be good neighbours and best friends for each other.

A stable and European Kosovo means a stable Western Balkans region, and vice versa. The choice is obvious.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, Minister for External Relations of the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Ismail (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin my statement with a quotation from the Koran:

> "Invite all to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best ..." (*The Holy Koran, XVI:125*).

Last year, I declared from this rostrum that peace — the continuing strategic objective of the Government of Sudan — was at hand. Today, from the same rostrum, I would like to note that peace has become a reality with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the adoption of the new Constitution. We have started to implement the Agreement in accordance with a fixed timetable.

Unfortunately, as soon as we started to implement the Agreement with our partners in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), we were faced with a great tragedy: the death of John Garang, the first Vice President of the Republic. With his passing, the country has lost an invaluable partner and participant in the peace process. It was not just a loss for the Sudan, but a great loss for Africa and all peace-loving people. Such tragedies are the true tests of our will, and our brethren in the SPLM have responsibly come through that crisis and difficult test, putting aside their bitter shock and continuing to build a durable peace.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was not limited solely to issues between the north and the south. It set up a comprehensive framework for resolving justly all the problems of our country. It has established rules for a political regime that considers citizenship to involve rights, duties and obligations — a regime that is based on democracy, the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights and the equitable division of wealth and power based on fair standards that will ensure comprehensive peace.

We are fully committed to the letter and the spirit of the Peace Agreement, and we accept and understand the magnitude of our responsibility to fulfil it. We are fully confident that bringing peace to the Sudan will have a positive impact on regional stability and allow the Sudan to continue to play its proper role within the international community.

As we have begun to implement the Peace Agreement, we call upon the international community immediately to lift all commercial and economic sanctions and restrictions, to cancel all of the Sudan's external debt and to fulfil the pledges it made at the Oslo conference. Such actions will provide support for the Agreement and promote reconstruction and development in the Sudan. In that context, we express appreciation and gratitude to the United Nations for the important role it has played in the implementation of the Agreement, particularly the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Pronk.

The people of Darfur are still not able to live in conditions of peace. We will make every effort to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Declaration of Principles adopted at Abuja, with a view to bringing about that objective. We will continue to cooperate with the international community in improving the humanitarian and security situation, which has already improved greatly. But that is not enough. We hope to ensure complete stability in Darfur. The Government's commitment to agreements and arrangements entered into relating to the achievement of a ceasefire and the improvement of the security situation should be matched by a similar commitment from the armed movements, which should end their violations and agree to an immediate ceasefire. The international community should continue to put pressure on them to negotiate seriously in order to achieve a peaceful solution to the problem.

My Government underlines the importance of achieving definitive peace in Darfur as quickly as possible. We have a three-track plan aimed at returning Darfur to its proper situation. The first is the political track, which is designed to resolve the root causes of the dispute and to reach an agreement. The second relates to the implementation of the voluntary repatriation programmes. The third relates to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. In the framework of those commitments, the Government has encouraged reconciliation among tribe and community leaders, which would help to provide a solution to the root causes of the conflict.

In order to improve the security situation and achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict, the Government is making every effort, with the participation of the international community, to deal with the urgent humanitarian problem and the problem of internally displaced persons and refugees. We have undertaken a number of development plans to deal with

the dispute about resources, which represents one of the main problems. In that context, the Government is looking forward to entering into an effective international partnership with a view to bringing about those ambitious plans and establishing a special fund for development and rehabilitation in Darfur similar to that agreed to at the Oslo conference for the south.

In expressing its appreciation for the efforts of the international community, the Sudan would like to pay tribute to the active role of the African Union. We call on the international community to continue to assist and support that role.

The Sudan adopted a transitional Constitution in July 2005, and the President and Vice-President will exercise their mandate in conformity with its provisions. We have established a Government of National Unity, which will continue the transitional process. We have begun this phase by conducting a responsible dialogue with all members of the political opposition, who continue to operate freely. The transitional Constitution includes human rights provisions ensuring respect for the rights, obligations and fundamental freedoms of all Sudanese citizens. We will continue to work with international organizations in order to develop and promote human rights in the country.

This is the last occasion on which I will speak to the Assembly as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, because yesterday a new Minister for Foreign Affairs, my brother Mr. Lam Akol, was appointed by the Popular Movement. I extend to the General Assembly my gratitude and appreciation for its cooperation during my work as Foreign Minister of the Sudan in the past several years.

Tragically, the Palestinian people are still under Israeli occupation. The international community is called upon to force Israel to halt its illegal practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, to dismantle the separation wall, to withdraw from all the Arab territories that it occupied in 1967 and to allow the Palestinian people to realize their legitimate rights, including their right to an independent State, with Al-Quds as its capital. The international community should take action to bring about a comprehensive, peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the road map, the principle of land for peace and the Madrid terms of reference.

The Sudan has participated in agreements aimed at putting an end to nuclear proliferation. The conflict-ridden Middle East should be a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. International justice and laws should apply in that region, with no exceptions for any State, with a view to ensuring stability and peace, emphasizing the rights of peoples to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes, particularly in scientific research. The Sudan supports the right of all countries, including Iran, to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes, in accordance with International Atomic Energy Agency regulations.

The situation in Iraq is very unstable. The Iraqi people, who are suffering greatly, need the international community to help them to overcome the crisis there. In this respect, we would like to underscore once again our principled position that we must preserve the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and ensure non-interference in its internal affairs, with a view to bringing about stability and peace and restoring normal living conditions there. We call upon the international community to contribute, as soon as possible, to the rebuilding of Iraq and to support the transitional Government so as to allow the Iraqi people to live in dignity on their land.

The African Union has set up policies and mechanisms aimed at dealing effectively with the dispute resolution and the establishment of stability on that continent, which is rich in resources, including human resources. Africa is continuing to use those resources for development purposes, within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The first meeting of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region restored hope that peace, stability and development can return to the region. We hope that the second such summit will be held within the next few months, and that it will result in a united stance that will lead to peace, security and development in the region. We were encouraged by the meeting that was held on the sidelines of the High-level Plenary Meeting with a view to preparing for a second International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

In this context, I would like to refer to Somalia — a very important African country, which is trying to move beyond the bitterness of war and conflict and to re-establish itself as a State. Somalia

should receive the cooperation and support that it needs from the international community, and from the United Nations in particular.

Since the Millennium Summit in 2000, some achievements have been made with a view to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But the Goals have not been adequately achieved in Africa, which still has to deal with poverty, disease, underdevelopment and debt. As we meet here five years after the first summit, we must pause and consider what we have achieved and what we aspire to achieve. We live in a world in which people have varied standards of living and wealth. The rich have become richer, and the poor have become poorer. The gap between them is great, and there are enormous paradoxes. There are very rich countries whose citizens spend millions of dollars on weight loss, and there are other poor countries that seek just a small fraction of that amount to keep barely alive.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm, as agreed in the framework of the Millennium Declaration, that we must achieve the Millennium Development Goals in order to create a better life for all humanity. Here, we must point out that the Sudan has worked hard to attain the goals and has made significant progress in reducing poverty and increasing basic education levels, despite the unjust siege and the long conflict in the southern part of the country. All those efforts are reflected in Sudan's 2004 MDG report.

In that context, we should stress the importance of the total cancellation of debt. Debt is a great hindrance to achieving the Development Goals in Africa and in the least developed countries. Attaching conditions to debt cancellation will only impede development. Here, we must remind developed countries of their commitments to financing for development, in accordance with the Monterrey Consensus.

An international partnership to achieve the MDGs as envisaged in Goal 8, is essential. Unfortunately, the main difficulty in achieving the Goals is the establishment of such a partnership, which will not be possible without allowing developing, and least developed countries in particular, to integrate fully into the international economy. Imposing unilateral economic sanctions against developing countries hinders free trade and investment. Financing and the transfer of technology are among the other issues encountered in efforts to achieve sustainable development.

We live in a world of many challenges and threats. The international community has recognized that development, peace and security are closely interconnected. The main challenges faced by the international community today are maintaining international peace and security and achieving economic growth and development. Meeting those challenges will be possible only in a collective world led by an effective and capable United Nations.

The Sudan has actively participated in the consultations on creating a framework for collective action and on United Nations reform. We support reform that is in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and the relevant provisions of international law. We have emphasized the establishment of a new human rights mechanism to address the shortcomings — including politicization, selectivity and double standards — that have prevented the Commission on Human Rights from carrying out its responsibilities. The Sudan believes that we should consider establishing a new mechanism that deals with the negative policies of the past and is committed to the principles of equality among States and respect for equitable geographical representation, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter. On the basis of what the United Nations has successfully achieved in the security, economic and social areas, we should aspire to achieve the objectives of the High-level Plenary Meeting and thus to create a peaceful and safe world in which all of us will shoulder our responsibilities.

Clearly, we all reject terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and we stand together with others to eliminate it; indeed, a counter-terrorism conference is now being held in Khartoum to combat terrorism in East Africa. What we reject are attempts to confuse terrorism with the struggle of peoples for liberation and independence and attempts to link terrorism to a specific religion or culture. Terrorism is an international scourge that is not limited to a specific religion or culture, and we believe that any attempt to confuse the issue could cause problems and weaken our collective resolve to develop a comprehensive strategy to combat it.

The Sudan will continue to be a messenger to States, calling for a dialogue among cultures and

civilizations aimed at attaining humanity's objectives. The international fight against terrorism must be based on the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant provisions of international law. In that context, the Sudan calls for the holding of an international conference to arrive at an agreed definition of terrorism and stresses that the rejection of terrorism does not mean that we should ignore the reasons behind it. We must deal with the root causes of the problem if we are to be successful in eradicating it.

In conclusion, the Sudan reaffirms its belief in the purposes and principles of the Charter. We stress our resolve to continue to work with the international community to strengthen the Organization so that it can efficiently carry out its role and mandate.

The President: I express to the Minister for External Relations of the Sudan my best wishes for the future as he leaves his post.

I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Alcinda Antonio de Abreu, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique.

Ms. De Abreu (Mozambique): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at the sixtieth session. We are delighted to see a distinguished son of Sweden and a friend of Mozambique in the stewardship of this body and wish to express our confidence that, under your able leadership, our deliberations will produce successful results. I would like to take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, for the remarkable manner in which he spearheaded the deliberations of the fifty-ninth session of General Assembly. May I also commend the Secretary-General for his continued vision and leadership in our collective efforts to pursue the fundamental ideals of the United Nations, in particular the implementation of the international agenda for peace and development highlighted in his report (*A/59/2005*). We encourage him to continue his outstanding work.

We gather here today inspired by the spirit of togetherness and collective vision on the path that we should strive to continue to travel in order to achieve our common aspirations, as underscored throughout the deliberations of the High-level Plenary Meeting. We must seize this momentum to reinforce multilateralism as a guiding principle upon which the international community should rely to adequately face today's challenges. We believe that the emphasis of the World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) on the vital importance of an effective multilateral system and our determination to fulfil the commitments we set for ourselves will generate and galvanize good momentum for action aimed at tangible results.

As we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, we should reflect on what we want the Organization to be and on what role each country and region should play in these collective endeavours. In recognizing inclusiveness and the equal rights of men and women and of all nations, the Charter of the United Nations builds on our diverse cultural and traditional values to unite us around our common humanity. Our failure to overcome the poverty trap in which developing countries are caught, as well as the constant threat posed by terrorism, indicates the need for an international system that is more inclusive and democratic and that conforms to the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant provisions of international law. It is our firm belief that the United Nations continues to be an indispensable instrument for achieving those objectives. Thus, the strength of the Organization must be high on our agenda. We ought to improve its performance by reforming its organs and structures.

Therefore, it is our sincere hope that United Nations reform will help to foster strong relationships and cooperative links of coordination among all its principal organs, in particular the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Security Council reform should be aimed at building transparency, democracy, openness and consistency with regard to all regions represented in the Organization. In that regard, the growing political commitment and involvement of Africa in the international agenda for peace and stability calls for enhanced representation on the Security Council.

We hope that the recently proposed Peacebuilding Commission will help to keep sustained international attention on countries in transition from post-conflict situations to recovery and long-term development and ensure continued support for them. Indeed, the experience of Mozambique's transition from a post-conflict situation to reconstruction and development testifies to the valuable contribution and impact of the concerted support provided by the United Nations and

the international community for peace and development efforts.

The adoption of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) gave new momentum to our quest to fight poverty, accelerate human development and facilitate the gradual and effective integration of the developing world into the global economy. Despite the less ambitious outcome of the recently concluded summit, the time has come to build a genuine international partnership and to reaffirm our political will to fully implement internationally agreed commitments.

We need to work diligently to implement the commitments made in Monterrey. In that regard, the establishment of a detailed calendar for the implementation of the goals set on financing for development is vital to generate access to additional financial support for developing countries. To that end, we welcome the decision by the European Union to set collective and specific targets with a view to reaching the internationally agreed target of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to official development assistance (ODA) by 2015.

The sustainable development of low-income countries, particularly in Africa, depends upon a more open, equitable and rules-based multilateral trading system, as trade constitutes an engine for growth and development. In that regard, we view partnership agreements such as the Cotonou Agreement and the African Growth and Opportunity Act as important steps towards fulfilling some of the development objectives. We strongly believe that the completion of the Doha round by 2006 will help to establish an international trading system consistent with development goals and policies.

While developing countries are striving to finance the MDGs, debt servicing has been diverting significant amounts of their limited resources, at the cost of social and economic development. In that context, we reiterate the calls for more radical action by the international community, in line with recommendations that debt relief should cover multilateral and bilateral debt and reduce debt stock and debt servicing by up to 100 per cent. To that end, we support the continuation of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and other relief measures, particularly those addressing the special needs of African countries.

In that regard, we commend the debt-cancellation decision made by the ministers for finance of the Group of Eight (G-8) in favour of 18 developing countries, including Mozambique. We encourage the G-8 and other development partners to continue with such important initiatives and to address the unsustainable debt burden of many developing countries, so that new resources can be invested in pursuit of poverty reduction.

The Government of the Republic of Mozambique is now fully engaged in the implementation of its programme for 2005-2009 that incorporates our vision of development based on continuity and renewal. That approach is founded on past experiences and programmes pursued in the quest for development and the well-being of all Mozambicans. The eradication of poverty requires new dynamism and vigour, as clearly pointed out in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and the Millennium Development Goals. In that context, our five-year programme focuses on integrated rural development and the expansion of basic economic and social infrastructure, with the aim of reducing absolute poverty through the promotion of rapid, comprehensive and sustained economic growth and job creation. In addressing social and economic development, the programme seeks mainly to reduce regional imbalances and to expand the supply of basic services such as health, education and access to electricity and safe drinking water. The programme also gives due attention to the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases, as well as to the special needs of young people in terms of training, employment and housing.

Through the implementation of sound political and macroeconomic policies and strategies for development, we have registered economic growth rates that have averaged 7.5 per cent annually from 2000 to 2005. Poverty levels have declined significantly, from 69.5 per cent in 1997 to 54 per cent in 2003. That has been possible due to our focus on our nationally owned poverty eradication strategy. That strategy has not only mainstreamed the MDGs and adapted them to our own realities, it also embodies a clear pro-poor and people-centred development strategy.

The consolidation of peace, democracy and national unity continue to be high on our national

agenda, as we recognize that peace and stability are sine qua non for securing sustainable development in our country.

We continue to build self-confidence around Africa. The continent counts on NEPAD to raise the spirit of ownership of African leaders, and thus bring about significant changes in our development. The adherence to date of 28 countries to the African Peer Review Mechanism has bolstered the credibility of participating States, as it ensures that their policies and practices comply with agreed political, economic and corporate-governance values, codes and standards.

We are seeing good examples of conflict resolution in Africa. However, conflicts continue to cause unbearable human suffering, which deprives a large number of our fellow Africans of their inalienable right to live in dignity. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and the international community at large to address both humanitarian crises and the root causes of conflict in Africa.

With regard to Western Sahara, we urge the parties concerned to work together with the Secretary-General with a view to finding a political solution to the long-standing conflict in that country.

We are following with keen interest the latest developments in the Middle East. We continue to believe that a lasting solution to the question of Palestine — the core of the conflict in the region — must be in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions and must fully recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

We welcome the decision to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism not later than June 2006, for that will constitute a further effort to strengthen the international community's resolve to face the challenge of eliminating the scourge of terrorism. Similarly, we would like to stress the importance of regional agreements and declarations to combat and eliminate terrorism in all its forms as a tool to strengthen cooperation among Member States and provide a platform for the effective implementation of international legal instruments to suppress terrorism.

We support the calls for a transparent verification mechanism that can help to prevent the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States. In that regard, we also share the view that all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, without discrimination and while undertaking their responsibilities for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, should have the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, as well as to engage in research on nuclear technology in conformity with the provisions of the Treaty.

We would like to conclude by reaffirming the commitment of Mozambique to the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as our belief that the United Nations reform process will strengthen the Organization with a view to providing more and better assistance to all Member States, in particular with respect to addressing the special needs of Africa.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Choe Su Hon, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Choe Su Hon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text furnished by the delegation*): On behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I should also like to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic, on his commendable work as President at the previous session. I look forward to the successful outcome of this session. My appreciation also goes to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts aimed at reforming the Organization to bring about multilateralism centred on the United Nations in conformity with the demands of the current changed situation.

Five years ago, when the Millennium Summit adopted its Declaration of peace, poverty eradication and respect for human rights, humankind sincerely hoped that, with the dawn of a new century, peace and prosperity would take hold around the world. However, despite the adoption of that Declaration and the aspirations of humankind, the world is today being drawn further into a vortex of instability and fear due to unilateralism and the highhandedness of the super-Power. On one side of the world, voices yearning for peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development continue to grow, while on the other side provocative acts such as armed invasion and the threat

of pre-emptive nuclear attack are being committed openly against sovereign States.

In North-East Asia alone, with the Korean peninsula at its centre, adventurous military attempts continue unabated, aggravating tension in the region, as does the strengthening of strategic military alliances, the large-scale introduction of highly sophisticated weapons and operational equipment, the establishment of missile defence systems and Ulchi Focus Lens-05 military exercises for pre-emptive strikes.

The current situation is becoming increasingly acute due to arbitrariness on the part of unilateralist forces. That urgently requires that Member States undertake a joint effort to bring about multilateralism centred on the United Nations on the basis of respect for the principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and mutual benefit.

As is well known, peace and stability on the Korean peninsula are directly linked to peace and security in the North-East Asian region and the rest of the world. As we have seen in recent years, the situation on the Korean peninsula is once again part of a vicious circle of tension and détente that is preventing the establishment of durable peace and stability. The primary cause for that lies in the national division forced upon us by foreign forces and the extremely hostile policy of the super-Power towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's policy of Songun Jongchi — which is to say, to give priority to military affairs — is aimed primarily at coping with the attempts of the United States to suffocate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which constitute a real threat. The Songun policy administered by the respected General Kim Jong Il is the basic safeguard for our sovereignty from the constant threat of the United States and for preventing another war on the Korean peninsula, thereby ensuring peace and security in North-East Asia.

This year, the north and the south of Korea together significantly commemorated the fifth anniversary of the announcement of the 15 June North-South Joint Declaration, as well as the sixtieth anniversary of Korea's liberation, thereby setting a new stage for the attainment of overall national unity and the realization of the cause of national reunification independently and peacefully under the theme "Our nation itself". The Government of our Republic will also make every possible effort in the future to bring about independent national reunification as soon as possible, achieve lasting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and bring about the nation's common prosperity by thoroughly implementing the 15 June North-South Joint Declaration.

With a view to facilitating better understanding on the part of Member States and making positive contributions to the work of the current session, I would like to refer to the principled position and sincere efforts of our Republic regarding a fair solution of the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

The Government of our Republic has consistently adhered to its position of addressing the nuclear issue peacefully, through dialogue and negotiations. As everyone knows, the nuclear issue is a direct product of the hostile policy of the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during more than half a century. Given that, driven by extreme hostility towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the United States has gone as far as designating our country as part of an "axis of evil" and making it a potential target for pre-emptive nuclear strikes, thereby militarily threatening our security, our country has been compelled to possess a self-defensive nuclear deterrent as a means of safeguarding our national dignity and sovereignty. In circumstances in which the United States, the sole world super-Power, is looking down on us and threatening to use nuclear weapons, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — a country with a small territory and population — has no alternative but to possess a strong and legitimate means of self-defence.

As we have clarified time and again, the ultimate goal of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with regard to the nuclear issue is the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula was called for by President Kim Il Sung, the fatherly leader of our people. The 1992 North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the 1994 Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States are manifestations of the invariable political will of the Government of the Republic to denuclearize the Korean peninsula by all means.

During the recent fourth round of six-party talks in Beijing, we approached discussions seriously and with magnanimity and a principled, fair and above-board position to achieve our consistent final goal of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula at any cost, thereby enabling the talks to come up with an agreement on the principles to that end as part of a broad framework to overcome all challenges. The joint statement issued at that meeting reflects our principled position on the resolution of the nuclear issue. At the same time, it also clearly specifies the obligations of the United States and South Korea as the parties responsible for the denuclearization of the entire Korean peninsula.

As we have clarified more than once, there will be no need for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to keep a single nuclear weapon if relations are normalized between our country and the United States, bilateral confidence is built and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not exposed to the United States nuclear threat any longer. What is most essential at this stage is for the United States to provide light-water reactors to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as soon as possible as evidence of the former's substantial recognition of the latter's right to peaceful nuclear activities.

We shall watch closely how the United States acts in reality during the "action for action" phase. Our country's Government will continue to be patient and to do its best to bring about the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

If the United Nations is to fulfil its mission to ensure international peace and security and economic and social development, it should be reformed in conformity with the demands of the new century. That is the unanimous view of the international community.

In that regard, it is important that we take a multilateral approach centred on the United Nations and in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter. To that end, efforts should be made to, inter alia, prevent unilateralism and high-handedness leading to violations of the Charter and of international law, and to ensure that the functions and role of the United Nations in addressing major international issues remain pivotal.

Disputes should be resolved peacefully, through dialogue and negotiation. The unilateral use of force can never be justified in any case. Such actions as authorizing specific countries to launch pre-emptive attacks on the pretext of preventing conflicts should not be viewed as strengthening the collective security system of the United Nations and should therefore be rejected, as they are dangerous attempts to ignore both the principles of non-interference in others' internal affairs, as well as respect for sovereignty, as stipulated in the Charter.

Secondly, all important international issues should be addressed fairly and reasonably, in the interests of the overwhelming majority of Member States. We should not allow them to be dominated or dealt with by the super-Power or by a few powerful countries. In this context, we have been consistent in our insistence on the establishment of a system that mandates the General Assembly to review and endorse Security Council resolutions relating to sanctions and the use of force that can affect international peace and security.

The Security Council should be reformed on the basis of the principle of ensuring the full representation of the non-aligned and developing countries, which make up the overwhelming majority of Member States. We should never tolerate the permanent membership of Japan, which refuses to liquidate its past crimes against other countries, distorting its history of aggression and driving the regional situation towards confrontation.

The reform of the United Nations human rights machinery should take place in accordance with the demands of the majority of countries. In reforming the human rights machinery, the Organization should consider its most pressing task and ultimate goal to be putting an end to infringement on national sovereignty, the politicization of human rights and the application of double standards and selectivity, which are the most serious human rights violations at present. Like the reform of the Security Council, that reform effort should be carried out on the basis of the principle of ensuring the full representation of the non-aligned and developing countries that make up the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership.

If that principle is ignored, the reform of the human rights machinery will remain just empty talk. Worse still, if the establishment of the Human Rights Council is aimed at legitimizing the high-handedness of a few countries on the pretext of human rights protection, the discussion itself will be completely meaningless.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to make an active contribution to the efforts of Member States to build a new, peaceful and prosperous world by further strengthening its friendly and cooperative relations with all countries that respect our national sovereignty in accordance with the ideal of independence, peace and friendship.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, chairman of the observer delegation of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Unlike the Israeli Prime Minister, who a few days ago told the Assembly that he had come to the United Nations from Jerusalem, I — a native son of the land — was not able to come here from Jerusalem, because East Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, still remains under Israeli occupation, despite the numerous United Nations resolutions in that regard. The abnormal situation of the city, which is sacred to the three monotheistic religions, is a clear indicator that we in the Middle East are, regrettably, still far from peace. Only when East Jerusalem is returned to its people, when United Nations resolutions are completely complied with and implemented and when the leaders of both countries are able to come freely from Jerusalem, will we have truly achieved the peace that we have so long awaited.

We are now at an important juncture that could constitute the beginning of the road to peace. Israel, the occupying Power, has completed its disengagement from the Gaza Strip with its withdrawal of the settlers, its dismantlement of the settlements there and the departure of the Israeli forces from that territory. In the northern West Bank, some settlers were also withdrawn, and four settlements were dismantled.

The end of the colonial settlement of one part of our land — regardless of how small it may be — is an important development, as is the withdrawal of the occupying forces from within that part. It is an important development that resulted from the steadfastness of our people and the growing realization, locally and internationally, of the impossibility of the continuation of the status quo. We recognize that the disengagement required political boldness. But, more important than the disengagement itself, are the way in which it occurred and the context, as well as the steps that will follow. That will determine whether the disengagement will take us further towards a comprehensive settlement and peace, or whether it is actually a step imposed by the realities on the ground and intended to facilitate the continuation of the occupation, the colonization of the West Bank and the obstruction of a final settlement.

For our part, we dealt positively with those matters and exerted strenuous efforts to prepare ourselves for assuming our responsibilities, to coordinate the steps to be taken with the Israeli side and to ensure a peaceful and safe atmosphere during the implementation phase. Indeed, we achieved reasonable results in that respect. Despite that fact, however, the basic nature of the plan remains: it was unilateral and did not take into consideration Palestinian interests and positions.

Israel, the occupying Power, has left the Gaza Strip completely devastated. Over the years, Israel destroyed Gaza's infrastructure, economic capabilities and social fabric, as well as the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus. Even the areas that had been under the control of its settlements were almost totally destroyed by Israel when it withdrew and left behind piles of rubble, which in itself constitutes a serious problem economically, environmentally and psychologically. Another problem was that Israel left behind, and did not dismantle, what it called houses of worship — which were not supposed to be there to begin with — in total disregard of its legal obligation to return the land to its original condition prior to the occupation.

Furthermore, since the disengagement, the Gaza Strip has remained under the control of Israel, which effectively continues to control the airspace, the territorial waters and the borders, thus continuing its control of the movement of persons and goods into and out of Gaza. For that reason, and in the light of the principle of the unity and territorial integrity of the occupied Palestinian territory, the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip has not ended and the legal status of Gaza has not changed: it remains part of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

Overall, Israel's occupation and colonization of the Gaza Strip constitutes one of the worst injustices in recent history. In addition, it must be clear that the Gaza Strip — which comprises only 6 per cent of the area of the occupied Palestinian territory and which is

the most densely populated area in the world — cannot attain economic or political sustainability in isolation from the West Bank; without a permanent link to the West Bank, without freedom of movement and without tangible political progress and similar steps taken there.

What Israel is doing in the West Bank, particularly in East Jerusalem, is cause for us to be even more pessimistic. Israel has continued its construction of the wall in disregard of the unprecedented 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and resolution ES-10/15 of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly in that regard. As everyone can see, Israel has persisted in committing this grave crime, continuing to seize Palestinian land and attempting to annex it de facto, thereby destroying the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinians, isolating them and imposing on them a totally different way of life and an unacceptable political situation.

Israel, the occupying Power, has also continued to establish and expand settlements. It has even devised the so-called E-1 plan to seize the whole of East Jerusalem and connect it to the Maale Adumim settlement, thereby severing the West Bank into two separate parts. All of the foregoing not only is unlawful and inhuman, but will also destroy any hope for a settlement and peace based on the two-State solution.

The central mission for the international community now, if we wish to safeguard the future of the Middle East and maintain the prospects for peace, is to bring about a real and complete cessation of all settlement activities and of the construction of the wall and to enforce the rule of law, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and relevant United Nations resolutions. That must be our central mission, and whether there is political progress or not, we must accomplish it.

But then, how are we to deal with the situation and move forward? First, we need to find rapid solutions for the outstanding issues regarding the Gaza Strip, including the Rafah crossing, the airport, the seaport, the removal of rubble from the Gaza Strip, and linking Gaza to the West Bank. If we resolve those issues we may be able to change the living conditions of the Palestinians there.

Secondly, the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings should be implemented, particularly the Israeli withdrawal from cities to pre-September 2000 positions and the release of prisoners and detainees. This could bring about a new reality and begin the process of rebuilding confidence between the two sides.

Thirdly, and in parallel with the aforementioned, it is necessary to return to negotiations and begin urgently the implementation of the road map, which lies at the heart of making political progress and is the path to a resolution of the conflict. For our part, we are ready to do this, and to begin final status negotiations immediately, as called for by President Abbas in his speech a few days ago. We hope that the Quartet will use its influence to make that happen, and we also hope that the international community as a whole, represented by the United Nations, will provide the needed support in that regard.

Here we must stress the importance of the international assistance being extended to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority. We would like to express our gratitude to all donor countries for their important and considerable contributions. In that regard, I would like to express our appreciation as well for the role being played by Mr. Wolfensohn and his team, in particular for rapidly putting together an assistance programme for the Gaza Strip and for promoting economic development in the entire occupied Palestinian territory. In that regard, the importance of the Group of Eight (G-8) initiative must be emphasized, and we express our hope that all donor countries will support it.

We look forward to enjoying a dignified life like all other peoples of the world; we look forward to exercising our right to self-determination and national independence; we look forward to building our institutions and to enjoying a democratic way of life and democratic governance; we look forward to a peace based on two States, Palestine and Israel, in conformity with the 1949 Armistice Line; and we look forward to a just, agreed solution for the Palestine refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III).

We have worked seriously to put an end to the cycle of military attacks and counter-attacks. We undertook a national dialogue that led to a unilateral declaration of ceasefire, and that ceasefire has been respected despite Israel's obstructions and provocations. That effort has led to an improvement in the general atmosphere; it is incumbent upon both

parties to strengthen it. For our part, we will continue our national dialogue with a view to establishing a permanent and mutual ceasefire in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, while reaffirming the right in principle of the Palestinian people to resist occupation and to self-defence. We must also reach a commitment by all Palestinian groups for a complete cessation of the targeting of civilians in Israel, which we have repeatedly condemned and which we view as harmful to our national interest.

Moreover, we will continue to exert efforts to impose law and order and to enhance our political system on the basis of real democracy, encompassing political pluralism and elections at all levels, including municipal and legislative elections. Israel must stop its attempts to interfere in and sabotage those elections. We will also continue to advance the development of our national institutions in various fields and will continue to try to rebuild the Palestinian economy and to improve living conditions. We must do that comprehensively throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including, of course, in the Gaza Strip, which has suffered the most extensive destruction. We shall exert our utmost efforts to achieve those goals, even though we realize that they are really the tasks of post-conflict reconstruction and that no other people has realized such goals while still under occupation.

Our achievements will inevitably be limited, since Israel, the occupying Power, still controls most aspects of everyday life in the territories. Any progress in that regard will remain directly and organically linked to the achievement of real progress in the resolution of the conflict and the achievement of a comprehensive settlement between the two parties.

It seems that Israel and some of its friends now feel that they have succeeded in imposing many illegal conditions on the ground and in creating a degree of vagueness regarding some aspects of the conflict. In that way, they feel that they have an opportunity to undermine the legal foundations of the question of Palestine, to undermine international legitimacy and to erode the neutrality of the United Nations. We, in contrast, believe that situations created illegally will not stand. We affirm that the facts are clear and indisputable, that justice and the rule of law will eventually prevail over force and that the United Nations — the embodiment of the international community — will not forsake its responsibilities and will not relent in the face of continuous violations of its resolutions.

We hope that the Israeli authorities will begin to seriously rethink their policies and positions instead of trying to market them in the United Nations and in other international forums. We hope that they will declare their respect for United Nations resolutions and their readiness to implement them, rather than blaming the United Nations for adopting those resolutions. That will be the start of the solution and the start of a final peaceful and permanent settlement, which must be based on law, international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.